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Volume XIV, No. 3

McGILL UNIVERSITY FACULTY OF LAW
UNIVERSITÉ MCGILL FACULTÉ DE DROIT

September 27, 1993
le 27 septembre, 1993

GLASNOST MALAWI STYLE: Eating cockerel steak.

by Tom Nkwela Likambale
LL.B IV

Along the tidy streets of Malawi's towns the atmosphere has recently transformed from bland timidity to hot and lively political conversation. Everyone is abuzz about the result of the national referendum held on June 14th 1993 in this land of the lake and sunshine. Inside office buildings, the corridors and suites drone with the idling of political debate and repartee. And on the street everyone has a comment on the decapitation and *kanyenya* (barbecuing) of the Black Cockerel which is the symbol of the ruling Malawi Congress Party (MCP).

The sudden political agitation follows the defeat of the government side in the plebiscite on whether or not to establish a

multi-party democracy in the country. By a 63% majority Malawians voted to gut the black rooster of the authoritarian one-party state in favour of lighting *Nyali* (lantern), the symbol used by the advocates of pluralism.

No less than five new political parties have mushroomed since then and more than ten independent papers have sprung up in this country where none were tolerated before. The papers sport spicy, unflattering articles and cartoons of members of the regime. If you were in this South-East African country any time before May of 1992 when the catholic bishops punched the first holes through the MCP balloon you might not recognize *The Warm Heart of Africa* today. That high-flying, mighty regime

has been mercilessly deflated!

For thirty years any talk, even in private, against the authority of the MCP, the government or "His Excellency the Life President, Ngwazi Dr. Hastings Kamuzu Banda, Lion of Malawi, Father and Founder of the Nation, Protector No.1 of Women, Farmer of the First Order, and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces" was treason punishable by death.

The president must still be addressed using his full title or an acceptable abbreviation. In ordinary conversation you can refer to the president as "H.E." (His Excellency), or "Ngwazi" for "Intrepid Conquering Hero".

Comments about the President's age (believed to be around 94) were a capital offence. Similarly, any comments

(Continued on page 4)

Rick Jones

Temporarily

Subdued

Someone who won't be doing any cross border shopping for a while is Roger Benjamin, whose recent arrest ended a saga of cross-Canada con-artistry that is more

by Josh Bezonsky
(reprinted with the kind permission of the weekly Montreal Mirror)

compelling than most made-for-TV-movies. Benjamin, if that is his real name, stole the applications of prospective law students first at UBC, then at McGill

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ANNOUNCEMENTS / ANNONCES

Clubs/Associations: Budget submissions (club funding request) forms can be picked up at USO as of September 22, 1993. The forms must be completed and handed in no later than October 1, 1993. The rules will be posted at USO and in the LSA office. For further details, please contact the LSA at 398-6966.

The Faculty of Law Placement Office Needs You!!!

The Placement Office carries a large up-to-date collection of recruiting materials from over 150 law firms in Montreal, Quebec City, Ottawa, Toronto and Vancouver.

The office has information on U.S. and overseas placement opportunities as well as a collection of legal directories for North America and the U.K.

In addition the office has information on articling and admission guidelines for the largest bar associations and the Barreau du Quebec, as well as articling and "stage" opportunities with federal and provincial governments and other "non-traditional" areas.

The Placement Office is student-run and requires 1-2 hours of your time per week to staff the office and make it available to students in the faculty.

If you are interested please sign up at the Placement Office near U.S.O./S.A.O.

Please note that the Placement Office also requires resource materials. If you have done research on placement opportunities in the U.S. or in the area of environmental law or special interest and advocacy groups we would be

pleased to take some of this off your hands. Also, if you had an interesting job last summer in a law-related area we ask that you drop by the Placement Office and fill out a Summer Placement Survey.

Undergraduate Studies Office (formerly the SAO)

Welcome to the new-look USO which incorporates Admissions and Student Affairs. We are there to answer all your usual and unusual queries and generally to help ease your way through law school.

Changes made during the summer include:

Lost and Found is now located in the LSA office. The safe in the USO is, of course, available should an item of value be turned in.

Student mail boxes remain in the USO.

The **USO Notice Board** is now in the corridor around the corner from the office area.

We are hoping to use the student computer network as a notice board at some time in the future. USO will keep you posted via the *QUID* of progress in this matter.

You will find locker assignments posted on the bulletin board in the cafeteria.

Transcript verification will take place October 12-15 inclusive in New Chancellor Day Hall, 9:30-4:30 daily. Please take the time to verify your transcript and report any errors

immediately - it is important. *First term examination numbers will also be available at this time.

Dean's Office - concerning dates for Faculty Council meetings for the 93-94 academic year, please note the following change: December 9th, 1993 changed to December 2nd, 1993.

THE MCGILL LAW JOURNAL / LA REVUE DE DROIT DE MCGILL

While you were away enjoying your summer, the **Law Journal** executive was hard at work producing Volume 38. Consequently, Volume 38(1) was published this summer and is currently available for pick-up. Volumes 38(2), 38(3) and 38(4) should be published during the fall term.

Nous invitons tous les étudiants et étudiantes de deuxième, troisième et quatrième année au 3661 bis, rue Peel (porte du côté) pour ramasser leur copie de la **Revue**. Tous ceux et celles qui désirent compléter leur abonnement pourront, par la même occasion, se procurer les numéros manquants.

Second year students should receive Volume 38 in its entirety. Third year students are entitled to Volumes 37 and 38, while fourth year students should have received these two volumes and Volume 36.

Veuillez nous excuser pour le retard dans la publication du Volume 38. Au plaisir de vous rencontrer au 3661 bis, rue Peel.

Quid Novi is published weekly by students at the Faculty of Law of McGill University, 3644 Peel Street, Montréal, H3A 1W9. Production is made possible by support of the Dean's office and by direct funding from the students. Les opinions exprimées sont propres à l'auteur. Toute contribution n'est pas publiée qu'à la discrétion du comité de rédaction et doit indiquer l'auteur ou son origine.

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Doing Something About the Lawyer Stereotype

By Desmond Lee

"So you're going to be a lawyer, eh?"

I know that I have heard this condescending remark from many people since deciding to come to McGill to embark on the "noble" Study of law, and maybe some of you have too. It was a great summer to be contemplating such a career, as lawyers, not unusually, held a disproportionate share of the mass media's attention. From Scott Turow's bestseller, *Pleading Guilty*, to the much-hyped movie, *The Firm*, to the Californian attorney who was shot in his office by a client, I had to wonder just what kind of adventure I was in for. Put aside the attorney who was shot -- after all, we all know that the U.S. has a serious gun problem, and that we shouldn't consider this case exceptional simply because the victim happened to be one of our own. The one thing that seemed to be in every newspaper and magazine I happened to pick up this summer was the issue of lawyer-bashing. For instance, there is the scene in *Jurrassic Park* where the anal-retentive lawyer gets chomped by a T. Rex, much to the delight of everyone in the audience. And I'm sure most of you are well acquainted with the kind of jokes about the legal profession that have been circulating, which incidentally, I have heard are now being recycled, with "politicians" substituting for "lawyers", given that it is election time.

Lawyers are probably one of the few groups that can safely be the target of jokes in this sensitive climate of nineties political correctness. After all, few would consider lawyers to be a disadvantaged, or otherwise oppressed, group of people. It is never very long, however, before any group tires of being the target of ridicule. Lawyers are no exception, and they are certainly more than able to come to their own defense in this matter. The heads of the American and Canadian Bar

Associations, in representing the legal profession, have both called for an end to derogatory comments directed at lawyers.

While asking the public to stop their sniveling comments has some merit, the only real way to end the lawyer-bashing is to take away the reasons for doing it. The issue that should be in all of our minds as law students, professors, and others in the legal profession, is what we are prepared to do to demonstrate that we are responsible and important contributors to the community-at-large.

We must look at the basis for the kind of cynicism that is prevalent today amongst non-legal people. It is true that for many, having to deal with a lawyer is often not a pleasant experience. For better or worse, we are often called upon to give advice in some very messy situations. It is also true that a few lawyers have helped to give the profession an unflattering reputation. And it does not help that the media seems to enjoy portraying lawyers in a stereotypical way -- aggressive, ruthless, dishonest, and of course, very wealthy.

Certainly, our profession is not without its own flaws, as has been recently brought to attention, most notably by the CBA task force report on sex equality headed by former Justice Bertha Wilson. The report noted that "female lawyers face the same types of problems as women face throughout Canadian society". Many legal-educated people are fortunate enough to have the opportunity to shape social policy in one way or another. Our future credibility in influencing these policies will be greatly diminished if these problems continue to run rampant within our own profession. As a new, and supposedly more-aware, generation entering the legal profession, we are in a special position to be able to initiate reform in such areas as sexual and racial equality, judicial accountability, etc., as the existence of these problems

is now acknowledged by the legal profession.

In her speech at this year's annual meeting of the CBA, incoming President Cecilia Johnstone had this to say about lawyers: "We are the people's last line of defense against the sometimes crushing machinery of the modern state. We are the guardians of the public interest when political and administrative processes fail them. And we are the foremost protectors of the most fundamental rights of Canadians". Very moving -- but is this the truth?

I think it is, or rather, I think it can be. All of us will soon be in a position which requires great responsibility -- some of us are in this position already. We will all have the privilege of having a knowledge and wielding a certain power that not everyone in society has (or wants!). It is not that we must all become hard-core activists pushing for social reform, and I would never suggest that some branches of the legal profession are more "noble" undertakings than others. Rather, when we leave the comfortable confines of this faculty, we must remember to perform our duties, in whatever field we are in, with the utmost consideration for society, and moreover, for the people that we serve. Those that have neglected to do this have tainted the reputation of the legal profession, and are responsible for perpetuating the negative image that lawyers have acquired.

The Dean of this faculty mentioned, in his orientation day speech a few weeks ago, that a significant proportion of this year's entering class expressed a strong interest in "human rights". I sincerely hope that this was not just nice-sounding rhetoric for the purposes of getting accepted into the law faculty here at McGill -- and don't get me wrong -- it does sound nice. No, I hope that, for some of us, this interest will translate into genuine action when we leave this faculty as graduates.

(Continued from page 1)

about his sex life were taboo - except that the bachelor president has this "Official Hostess", Cecilia Tamanda Kadzamira, who must be referred to as "Mama", and draws the highest government salary save the president's. Her job description is unknown. She is beside the president at every public appearance; lives with him in his many palaces and generally is his constant companion and personal confidant. In public speeches the now senile president often starts with "Mama and I...". She has ordered as many people killed as has her uncle and heir apparent, Minister of State in the President's Office, John Tembo. She is the third wealthiest person in Malawi after the Ngwazi and John Tembo.

Speculation about the succession to the presidency was also treason. Political cases were tried in Traditional Courts where the defendant was not allowed legal representation and all rules of procedure were biased against him or her.

The dress code was strict. A woman in pants or "short" dress could be apprehended, forced to change into acceptable dress or have her dress lengthened and charged a fine to defray the expenses while all the time being slapped and called a *hule*, or whore. Acceptable garments were skirts, dresses, or the traditional "*chirundu*", that reached below knee level but not shorts or trousers. Despite today's liberalised atmosphere few women have ventured to test the tolerance of the still-ruling party in this regard. Foreigners must wear their hair short. So do not be surprised when you arrive at Kamuzu International Airport (KIA) in Lilongwe if a security officer escorts you to a secluded room for a free haircut. This has its origins in the Ngwazi's

disgust with the hippies of the sixties.

He banned the U.S. *Peace Corps* from the country in the early seventies for this reason.

To be fair, the Ngwazi practices what he preaches: he appears in public only in a three-piece suit of conservative cut, a matching homburg hat, an expensive walking stick on his left hand, and a traditional chief's fly-whisk on his right which he waves to acknowledge the cheers of "his" people. Except for the fly-whisk and his dour 5-foot frame he looks like an Englishman of the 1940s.

The Ngwazi spent the forties first in Scotland then England. Before that, he had spent time in the United States. Even earlier, around 1915, he walked from his home village in the then Nyasaland to the then Southern Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe (his account is that he walked all the way to the then Union of South Africa - but researchers say he completed the trip by train). Still this was a feat of courage for a mere adolescent. The distance would be roughly equivalent to that between Montréal and maybe Toronto except in thick tropical jungle, with all that entails. He later sailed to the United States and in the late thirties or early forties left for the United Kingdom after acquiring degrees in Philosophy, Political Science and Medicine at Chicago U and Meharry Medical College in Indiana. In Scotland he distinguished himself at the Royal College of Surgeons at Edinburgh and later practised medicine in Liverpool and London. In the mid-and-late 1950s he lived in Kumasi in Kwame Nkrumah's Ghana where his medical licence was later revoked allegedly for performing illegal abortions on

GLASNOST MALAWI STYLE:

young Ashanti girls. Thus, when the young radical nationalists in Nyasaland began to agitate for separation from the imposed Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland and for total independence from Britain, and when they invited him home to lead the then Nyasaland African Congress (now MCP), he accepted readily. He dropped his British wife, a former Mrs. French with whom he had eloped following a suit by her then husband, Major French, who was not amused by the Ngwazi's intervention. In that day a true African leader (of Nyasaland, at least) was not supposed to be escorted by a foreign spouse. He returned in 1958 to an enthusiastic welcome forty years after he had left his native land. By now he was already the stuff of legend in this land which had not seen any other of its own "conquer the white world" quite in this way.

They made him President-General of the Nyasaland African Congress and *carte blanche* to reorganize and govern it as he deemed appropriate. He fought for Nyasaland's cessation from the federation with admirable single-mindedness, and advocated Nyasaland's full independence with militant zeal. My mother says it was the first time she had ever heard a black man describe a white man as "stupid". She had only been used to hearing that adjective used by colonialists to describe Nyasas, as we were called then.

In 1963 Nyasaland broke away from the "stupid" federation and achieved full independence as Malawi in 1964. The Nyasaland African Congress had pulverised other parties at parliamentary

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Eating cockerel steak.

(Continued from page 4)

elections. It changed its name to become the "mighty" Malawi Congress Party (MCP), and adopted the cockerel as its symbol and "Dawn!" as its slogan. Only at dawn is there the promise of a new day, and this is heralded by the cock-o-doodle-doo of the cockerel.

But only six weeks into independence, the Ngwazi had to face a cabinet "crisis". Younger ministers - the same ones who had called him back to Nyasaland to help fight the federation - rebelled against his paternalistic authoritarianism. But using clever political footwork he outmanoeuvred them, booting them out of the country or killing them. He then launched one of the most successful one-man rules of the century. He banned other political parties and in 1971 had himself declared president-for-life. His thugs eliminated anybody who even smelt like having presidential ambitions. Parliamentarians' debate became a competition to see who could praise him the most. His Censorship Board banned anything from the Simon and Garfunkel song *Cecilia* (he was convinced it was about his Official Hostess) to George Orwell's *Animal Farm* (it might entice Malawians to overthrow him). At every public appearance he was surrounded by women praise singers who wore clothes emblazoned with a picture of his face. He waved his fly-whisk in rhythm to songs they sang about his heroism, foresight, wisdom and physical prowess. They sang *zonse zimene n'za Kamuzu Banda!* (everything belongs to Kamuzu Banda!) and *Uyo! Ngwazi Banda, mtsogoleri wamuyaya!* (Behold! Ngwazi

Banda, ruler forever!). Even in his old age he

still joins "his" women in dance.

The para-military Malawi Young Pioneers and the police did his thug work. Access to public utilities could be blocked by them if you could not produce, on demand, a membership card of the MCP. They faked car accidents to eliminate anybody suspected of opposition to the Ngwazi, his heir apparent or Mama. In the early '70s he unleashed his wrath against the Jehovah's Witnesses who refused to buy Congress Party membership cards. He sent all Gowans home (one of them had been heard by a government spy making comments pertaining to a "personality cult"). All Asian businessmen and women could operate businesses in cities only. University profs were detained for any lessons taught that insinuated anti-Ngwazi sentiments - which were really any comments even about another country. In detention torture was the order of the day. Others became what the Ngwazi himself has described as "food for crocodiles". He, John Tembo and Mama controlled all of the country's newspapers and only radio station (there is no TV). The press was therefore as sycophantic as parliament.

But in 1992 the catholic bishops of Malawi made history by being the first to launch open criticism of the regime. They wrote a pastoral letter which was read to the huge catholic congregation in the country exposing the evils of the society and its political system. But for foreign intervention, they were to be killed. The letter triggered wildcat strikes which paralysed the country. Many were killed. Later a member of the semi-legalized labour movement,

Chakufwa (literally the Dead One but meaning the Brave One) Chihana tried to read an anti-government statement on his return from an anti-government meeting held with other "dissidents" in Lusaka, Zambia. He was bundled into an unmarked police car by plain clothes police at gun point, and incarcerated. But the cat was already out of the bag. The western world placed a moratorium on aid pending irreversible progress towards democracy. The Ngwazi agreed to hold the referendum, convinced he would win it handily. He was wrong. There were enough international monitors to make sure it was fairly conducted. Although he tried all manner of harassment against the proponents of multi-partyism, he lost.

The death of the black rooster on June 14th strapped the ruling clique of any remaining legitimacy, if any did indeed remain. The Ngwazi himself had linked a "yes" vote to his own and the Congress Party's mandate to rule. Following the emphatic "no" vote therefore, the bloke has not been seen in public since July 6th (independence day) when he was booed at the Kamuzu Stadium; unheard of before. They are drawing cartoons of our demi-God doing humanly things in the company of his divine Official Hostess. Outrageous.

Presidential and parliamentary elections are timetabled for early 1994. The cacophony of the campaign is already on.

Got to go. There is this black cockerel steak I want to roast in *tsabola* (hot peppers). I'm hungry. See you, perhaps in the streets of some Malawi town. Hey - who knows, eh?

From Club Med to Aching - Impressions of a 1st Year

By Stacey Pinchuk, B.C.L. I

The giant mingle fests are over and the Club Med-style daily activities are through. Instead is the harsh realization that - Yikes! - those casebooks actually have to be removed from their plastic covers, and are about as fun and easy to read as a phone book in Swahili.

Yeah, yeah - the expert upper years who have been in first year and survived swear that not everything needs to be read. But most of us just don't listen to or believe you, and are furiously highlighting out of both eagerness and fear of missing whatever that point is that we're supposed to be extracting.

The magical, end-all-be-all summary is now a concept we understand, and hey, some of us have even proudly produced a bunch of our own (after countless hours and consultations with the dictionary).

The over-zealousness, trepidation

and crazy working are all outright unnecessary, many upper years proclaim. Rather than learn the law, we should just learn to do a bit less and chill out.

But like a four-year-old child warned by their mother not to put their hand on the stove, the only way to learn what to do and what to avoid doing is first by getting fried.

Until such frying happens, I, a geekily keen first year, will personally continue to tackle all work thrown my way, to pore over the readings, and to carry all codes, dictionaries and casebooks in my knapsack at once (they might suddenly be needed for reference) as physical preparation for the Ms. Olympia contest.

I am presently taking time off from my hectic reading schedule (detailed on post-its with different coloured flags) to extend a heartfelt thank you to everyone who I came into contact with during these oh-so-exciting first few weeks.

Thanks to those who put on an orientation that made me forget I had

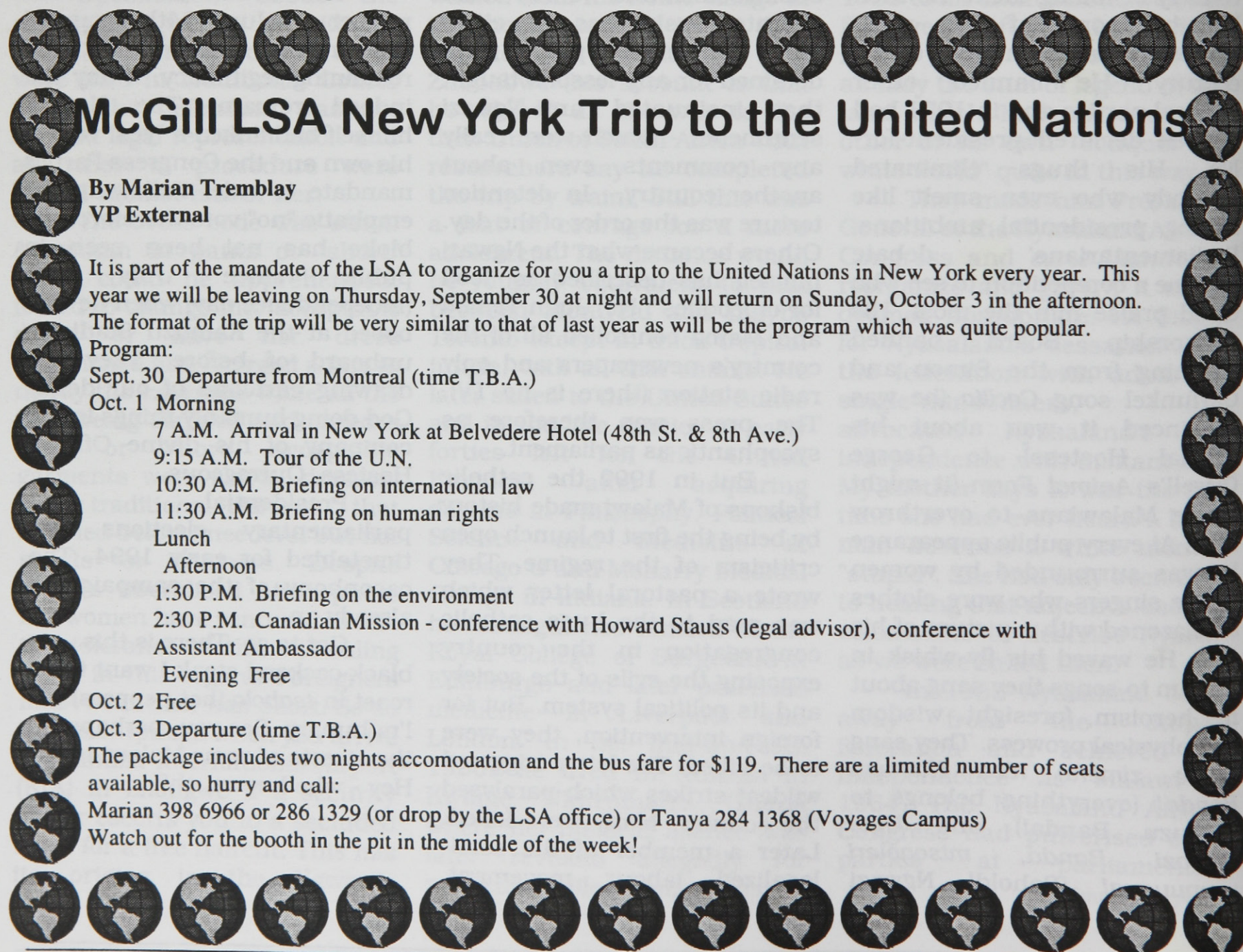
other friends outside the faculty and almost made me want to sing the "Hands-Up" song.

Thanks as well to everyone who persisted in putting their finger on my emotional pulse. I have never had more people inquire about how I was doing and how I was finding things in general.

After experiencing almost every emotion imaginable to humankind in a sequence that would surely characterize me as a bipolar schizophrenic, I am doing just fine thanks. And now that I know my way around, I am definitely finding things a lot more easily.

So thanks for the exhausting whirlwind of orientation, the often unsolicited expert advice and the frequent inquiries. Above all, thanks especially for those pivotal summaries that everybody intended to divert my way but just hasn't gotten around to doing yet....

[Eds. note: you do mean bipolar depressive now don't you?]



McGill LSA New York Trip to the United Nations

By Marian Tremblay
VP External

It is part of the mandate of the LSA to organize for you a trip to the United Nations in New York every year. This year we will be leaving on Thursday, September 30 at night and will return on Sunday, October 3 in the afternoon. The format of the trip will be very similar to that of last year as will be the program which was quite popular.

Program:

- Sept. 30 Departure from Montreal (time T.B.A.)
- Oct. 1 Morning
 - 7 A.M. Arrival in New York at Belvedere Hotel (48th St. & 8th Ave.)
 - 9:15 A.M. Tour of the U.N.
 - 10:30 A.M. Briefing on international law
 - 11:30 A.M. Briefing on human rights
 - Lunch
 - Afternoon
 - 1:30 P.M. Briefing on the environment
 - 2:30 P.M. Canadian Mission - conference with Howard Stauss (legal advisor), conference with Assistant Ambassador
 - Evening Free
- Oct. 2 Free
- Oct. 3 Departure (time T.B.A.)

The package includes two nights accommodation and the bus fare for \$119. There are a limited number of seats available, so hurry and call:

Marian 398 6966 or 286 1329 (or drop by the LSA office) or Tanya 284 1368 (Voyages Campus)

Watch out for the booth in the pit in the middle of the week!

A Moral Victory for the Kickbacks!

By Ami Kotler, LL.B II

I stood alone in the goal, awash with fear and trembling, as three rampaging brutes thundered down the field toward me. Anyone could tell they had tortious behaviour on their minds. I was just staring to consider the merits of graceful retreat, when suddenly, from out of nowhere came Drew "Bonecrusher" Allen, sliding across the field in a spiritual tackle that sent the ball (and one of the other players) hurtling out of harm's way. It was enough to rekindle anyone's faith in Providence...

Sadly, victory was not in the cards for the Kickbacks last Saturday,

as they lost a close 3-0 match to Some-Team-Of-Guys-Who-Must-Play-Soccer-A-Lot-'Cause-they're-All-Wearing-Bandanas-On-Their-Heads. Suffering from a severe attack of absenteeism, the team was forced to play three men short and could not substitute at all. (As far as I could tell, the other team was reproducing by mitotic cell division on the sideline the whole time - it seriously took about half an hour to shake hands with them all after the game...)

Despite being badly outnumbered, the team played a gutsy match and put up a good fight. Drew, Mike, Ryan, and Jorge were steady up and down the field. Special kudos as well to the rookies, Josh, Patrick and MJ (who played hung-over on one

hour's sleep), and to Santo Manna, who played an unprecedented two complete halves without receiving a single card from the ref.

On another bright note, several of us stayed behind to watch the women's soccer team (the Kickbackees!) fight to a tough 0-0 tie in their first game of the season. Several players show a lot of promise, last year's veterans look well-rested and everyone ran hard the whole game. The women's team looks like a good bet to repeat their championship season of last year and add another mug to their collections. Cheerleaders always welcome!

The Ultimate Sport

It was an action packed weekend of ultimate frisbee. After being scheduled for two games in the first two days of the ultimate frisbee season (who says lawyers have pull?), the various and sundry members of Run & Shoot can be seen limping around the law school. On Saturday,

game#1 brought home the cold reality that ultimate is a game with rules. While struggling to come to grips with this situation, the team was narrowly edged 8-2 (practice anyone?). On Sunday, however, the bonding had occurred and the team was hungry for victory. This showed in a gritty 8-7 victory that required comebacks on two occasions. With

47 seconds left and the game tied, Matt "Redwood" Taylor launched a rocket that Ami "The Rabbit" Kotler streaked to grab for the final point. Stay tuned for upcoming reports about Run & Shoot and try to hear the team chant (I think I can, I know I can) in the hallways.

Rick Jones...

(Continued from page 1)

and at Queen's, and used them to get letters of acceptance to the three schools. His scam was simple: He changed all the addresses to his own so that the schools would send their responses directly to him. He enrolled at UBC under the name Richard Pearson. There, he stole another student's car and committed credit card frauds before vanishing. In the 1991-92

academic year, he pulled off the same scam at McGill using the name Rick Jones. He stole more applications and attempted to cash numerous cheques which he doctored so that they were made payable to McGill University and Rick Jones. When McGill finally caught on in January 1992, "Jones" managed to elude both the MUC Police and McGill security (who literally had him in their grasp). He then scammed Queen's last year, assuming a third student's identity. Officials at Queen's

smelled a rat when they did a records check this January and alerted the Kingston authorities, who managed to bring the impostor to justice. He is now serving out the rest of a one-year prison sentence at Quinte Regional Detention Centre in Napanee, Ontario. If only he had just written his LSAT's like all other aspiring law students, with his cunning he would've eventually made a better attorney than Matlock. [Eds. note: whom, of course, we all strive to be]

MARGIE GILLIS WOWS!

By Jay Sinha LLB III

Have you ever had a cultural experience that blows you away such that you emerge from it shivery excited, full of energy and enthusiasm and perched somewhere up on cloud nine? I have. It happened last Saturday night at Theatre Maisonneuve in Place des Arts. Internationally acclaimed solo dance artist Margie Gillis (as well as five guest artists) performed the Montreal premiere of *Wild Hearts in Strange Times*. I decided to go on the force of reviews from the *Montreal Mirror*, the *McGill Daily* and certain friends who raved about Margie (I've never met her but I feel like seeing her performance put us on a first name basis). I was entranced.

It is not so much that the movements were always perfectly synchronized or clearly understandable in their message. I don't think they were meant to be. It is that they were more than just movements. When a movement becomes a natural undulation that conveys emotion one begins to sit up and stare. These natural undulations mixed with soulful music and her facial expressions and the way she used her hair and hands and long flowing dresses and the whole stage - it was really like watching emotions in motion. It was like talking to Margie, in an abstract sort of way.

The first piece was done to Glenn Gould playing a Bach piano solo. The music and movement mixture made me

think of random non-stop warm chocolate raindrops. It was soft and smooth yet pitter pattery with lots of opposite motions - back and forth, up and down. Then came an interpretation of *Waltzing Mathilda* as sung by Tom Waits. Here the mood shifted completely as a struggle became evident. The struggle was between a land-locked, disabled body and a soul that yearned for more. Just as the arms would take off into a smiling waltz the legs would try to follow but be stuck with the nagging limp and relegated to an anxious shuffle. Here we saw the pain of reality followed by the beauty of hope and imagination as the flying soul was eventually able to leave the body behind.

It was after the intermission that I was really taken beyond my expectations. Margie and four other dancers premiered a quintet in six movements entitled *A Gathering* and set to music by the British group Dead Can Dance. Just as Margie alone had had no problem filling the stage, here it became a whirling enigma, impossible to keep track of everything happening. A lapse into five-person synchronized motion would let the eyes relax momentarily before another explosion into kaleidoscopic shapes of directional energy. My favourite was the fifth movement performed by Margie alone. If you have seen the film *Jesus of Montreal* you may remember the scene of the passion play on Mont Royal when Jesus (Lothaire Bluteau) walks across Beaver Lake. The music of Margie's fifth

movement was the same Dead Can Dance song as was used during this film scene. Similarly, the emotions meant to be conveyed were the same. As the long, mystical notes of the woman's voice pierced the ears, Margie's undulations displayed fear, awe, uncertainty and respect.

The finale, a solo piece entitled *Slipstream*, was shaped around Bach's cello concerto *Prelude, Suite No. 1 in G major*. The music, while wainful, entreating, searching, prodding, flowing, was in a sort of symbiotic relationship with Margie's movements. It was as though she fed off the music and the music fed off her, a melding of art. The movements of her hands reminded me of Indian classical dance in the Bharatnatyam tradition; crisp and precise yet smoothly flowing as they carved air - each finger alive in its own way. For me personally, it could not have been a more fitting finale. This particular piece of music alone has always been enough to make me melt. Then to add it to dance like this -!- instant liquid.

I cannot claim to be a connoisseur of dance. Far from it I'm sad to say. However, I do know what I like. It's a visceral sort of reaction. I either like it or I do not. I do like Margie and I do think I am not alone in this respect. Only people that wow get five minute standing ovations.